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ABSTRACT

A national forum was conducted in September 1997 to obtain the views of former and current students in adult literacy education programs about challenges they faced and ways to facilitate success for future students. The thoughts of 57 literacy delegates from 44 states were elicited on 4 topics: participants' hopes and expectations; accessibility and support services in adult education programs; program structure of adult education programs; and factors influencing persistence and retention. Some of the perceptions of the delegates were the following: (1) many entered literacy education programs for employment reasons, others were concerned about their children and wanted to break the cycle of illiteracy, and still others wanted to empower themselves and plan for the future; (2) recognizing the critical difference education has made in their lives, literacy delegates indicated they are committed to sharing their knowledge and helping others to enroll in the programs; (3) literacy delegates learned about programs through public awareness campaigns and through friends and acquaintances; (4) participants enjoyed learning subjects that were relevant in their daily lives, using teaching materials designed for adults, and learning with peers; (5) participants identified barriers to success as motivational issues, transportation, childcare needs, scheduling conflicts, and financial burdens, whereas personal support systems were important to success. Participants made recommendations based on their observations for adult literacy program improvement. (KC)

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# National Forum on Adult Education and Literacy: Views from Adult Learners

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Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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September
1997

Division of Adult Education and Literacy
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education

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*A lighted candle has become the symbol for new adult learners. As an adult learns to read, the lighted candle is then passed to a new reader.*

In an emotional moment at the conclusion of the forum, the Literacy Delegates held hands and lit a candle for adult learners who are just beginning their journey to a higher level of literacy. Their message: Literacy is a light leading to a brighter future for millions of Americans.

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## Introduction

The Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, convened the *National Forum on Adult Education and Literacy: Views from Adult Learners* in September 1997. The purpose of the National Forum was to obtain views of former and current students in adult education programs about challenges they faced and their suggestions on ways to facilitate success for future students.

Learning about successful program strategies from adult learners is critical in determining the most appropriate ways to improve adult education programs. According to U.S. Department of Education estimates, 90 million adults in the United States currently lack basic reading, writing, and mathematical skills to function well in their jobs and in society (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992). Approximately 4 million of those participate in adult education programs each year.

An Advisory Committee was formed to solicit suggestions for the design and structure of the forum. This committee was made up of representatives from the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, the National Institute for Literacy, American Council on Education's GED Testing Service, the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium, and two volunteer organizations, Laubach Literacy Action and Literacy Volunteers of America. Two former literacy students were also involved in the planning. The committee approved questions utilized in focus groups and advisory committee members were invited to participate in the forum as observers. (See Appendix I)

*"You walk in with nothing and you leave with everything."*

Literacy delegates were students or former students in adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), General Educational Development (GED), family literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), or workplace literacy programs. State directors of adult education and directors of local programs nominated forum participants. Fifty-seven literacy delegates—representing 44 states and the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, and three national literacy organizations— attended the Washington, D.C. forum.

Following the opening plenary session, delegates to the *National Forum on Adult Education and Literacy: Views from Adult Learners* were divided into six focus groups. Facilitators for the group discussions worked from a set of common questions designed to elicit comments from the literacy delegates on the following four topics:

- Participants' Hopes and Expectations
- Accessibility and Support Services in Adult Education Programs
- Program Structure of Adult Education Programs
- Factors Influencing Persistence and Retention

Each focus session devoted at least 90 minutes to each of the four topics. This document summarizes the literacy delegates' comments. Whenever possible, the participants' actual words or phrases have been cited to preserve the thoughts and feelings conveyed. (See Appendix II )

In addition to the focus group discussions, literacy delegates had an opportunity to participate in several plenary sessions at the national forum and to visit Capitol Hill for a congressional symposium about adult education and literacy. This symposium was hosted by Patricia W. McNeil, Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, and Ronald S. Pugsley, director of the Division of Adult Education and Literacy. In the closing session, a panel of Literacy Delegates provided a summary of the focus group discussions to their peers. At the conclusion of the meeting, literacy delegates received certificates of appreciation for their significant contributions to the *National Forum on Adult Education and Literacy: Views from Adult Learners.*

## Hopes and Expectation

A major objective of the forum was to analyze what motivated the diverse group of participants to enter adult education and literacy programs. More specifically, forum participants were asked to explain their reasons for enrolling in such programs, their initial goals and expectations, how their experiences in the programs affected their thinking, and what influence these program experiences had on their lives and those of their families and friends.

### Reasons for Enrollment

Employment was the motivation for many entering the programs. Delegates feared that limited reading skills could cost them their jobs, felt frustrated at being overlooked for promotions, and felt trapped in unsatisfying jobs.

*"Knowledge is power. The more you learn, the higher you can go."*

Education was viewed as the key to acquiring the skills necessary to secure and enhance employment. Whether unemployed or underemployed at the time they entered the programs, the Literacy Delegates wanted to develop their skills to be better able to meet the challenges of today's workplace.

Family concerns influenced the decision of many to enroll. Delegates desired to serve as positive role models for their children, help their children with homework, and read to their children and/or grandchildren.

Participants expressed a desire to break the cycle of illiteracy in their families. They wanted to participate more actively in their children's education and provide more support for their children. A few indicated that they enrolled in order to continue receiving welfare assistance.

Citizenship was another goal for many of the adult learners. Delegates wanted to learn to communicate in English through ESL programs, develop work skills so they could succeed in this country, and gain an understanding of the customs and practices of our country.

Participants realized that, without the basic English language skills of reading, writing and speaking, their employment options and their chances of becoming citizens were limited.

*"...hungry for knowledge."*

Personal empowerment needs motivated others to enter adult education programs. Enrollment offered delegates the opportunity to find needed direction in life, prove to oneself and to others that academic success was possible, make choices about the future by acquiring new skills, and complete courses necessary for admission to college.

Although many literacy delegates enrolled in the adult education and literacy programs for job-related or family reasons, achievement of self-esteem was a common goal. In addition to improving reading and job skills, they wanted to prove that they could do something with their lives. Whether "tired of faking it"—pretending they could read when they could not or "tired of making excuses" about their limited education—they wanted to learn.

While the reasons for enrollment varied, a commonly expressed theme was a "hunger for knowledge." Many literacy delegates indicated a long-standing desire to learn but a lack of confidence about their ability to do so.

## Planning for the Future

Since setting goals is a major component of adult education programs, adult learners are encouraged to establish goals and plans for goal attainment. Many Forum participants admitted to entering programs with limited or vague goals. Low self-esteem and previous academic problems often prevented them from recognizing their own potential. However, once they began experiencing success in adult education and literacy programs, they began to see other opportunities open to them. These possibilities were reflected in the belief of their greater potential for achievement and in personal transformations, which enabled individuals initially requiring society's help to become contributors—giving back to their communities by encouraging other adult learners. Teachers, tutors and mentors were credited with helping literacy delegates define and take steps toward accomplishing their goals.

*"I got off welfare. Now I'm a lifelong learner."*

## Expanding Horizons

The impact of adult education on the Literacy Delegates was profound and lasting. According to the Delegates, the programs not only helped them achieve their goals but also exceeded their expectations. Adult education programs helped them learn, enhance their ability to see beyond their limitations, and attain a better quality of life.

*"Initially, I just wanted to get my GED. Now I'm going to college to become a teacher."*

Their positive learning experiences broadened their perspectives and helped them realize they "could want and achieve more." Many revised their goals after discovering new opportunities and learning to accept greater responsibility for their lives. The experience made them more confident, more self-assured, and more willing to seek new challenges.

Those adults who entered the programs with undiagnosed learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, said that they began to believe in themselves once their learning disabilities were properly identified and addressed. Then, they too realized that they could learn.

## Personal and Family Transformation

Literacy delegates shared powerful stories of how the adult education programs changed their lives:

- **Increased confidence and expanded vision.** Clearly, education experiences had opened doors for literacy delegates. They discovered the joy of learning and expressed excitement about continuing their studies. Delegates' attitudes about life and learning were transformed. Many echoed the words of a participant who said the experience made her a lifelong learner. Literacy delegates learned they could grow and achieve greater success in their lives.

- **Intergenerational benefits—parents and children change.** Participants credited adult education programs with helping them become better parents—mothers and fathers who could now read bedtime stories to their children and help them with their homework. Literacy delegates learned how to communicate with their children and work through discipline problems. They felt enrollment provided a positive model for their children and were pleased when their children followed their example.

*"Once you've educated a parent, you've educated a child."*

- **Greater self-sufficiency.** The vast majority of the participants said that their families were proud of their achievements. Few described situations in which their spouses or families felt threatened by their increased independence. The benefits were far-reaching. Many entered the workforce for the first time. Thanks to the successful completion of an adult education program, several delegates reported that they were able to secure employment, no longer needed public assistance, and began saving to own homes.

## Reaching Out to Others

Recognizing the critical difference education has made in their lives, literacy delegates indicated they developed a strong empathy for others like themselves, who did not have the opportunity to complete their education. They felt a commitment to encourage others to enroll in adult education and literacy programs. Many expressed a desire to serve their communities, to share their love of learning with others, and to help others learn how to read. Some described their work with children, at-risk youth, and adults at local and state levels. Others reported continuing their studies in order to serve as future teachers, tutors and mentors.

*"Before I never worried about tomorrow; now I plan for tomorrow."*

Many of the literacy delegates have been asked to travel throughout their home states to promote literacy, addressing various community service organizations and companies about their learning experiences and the need for adult literacy programs. A few were invited to speak at homeless shelters and correctional facilities to provide outreach to potential students. Delegates stressed the need for greater efforts to reach those with the greatest need for education, such as homeless or incarcerated individuals, alcoholics and drug addicts, and our nation's most economically disadvantaged.

## Accessibility and Support Services

The second discussion topic focused on accessibility of adult education programs and availability of support services. Research has often documented the need for greater support services to facilitate adult participation in these programs. Given limited financial resources available for adult education, it is essential to identify which support services have the greatest impact on student attendance and learning.

Literacy delegates were asked how they heard about programs, why they selected a particular program, what types of support helped them achieve success, and what obstacles they overcame to participate in programs.

### Paths to Success

*"Once you walk through those doors, you will never be the same. You will never see yourself in the same way."*

Statistics gathered by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, indicate that over 4 million Americans enroll in adult education and literacy programs each year. Some are recruited, some referred, and others find their way into programs through self-directed inquiries. In the focus groups, it was found that many Literacy Delegates were referred to programs by a friend.

Some literacy delegates actively sought information through contacts:

- local program officials
- schools their children attend
- YWCA
- public library
- local community colleges

Others were referred to programs:

- friends and family members
- social service agency workers
- employment counselors
- probation officers
- workers in homeless shelters

Media attracted participants:

- public awareness campaigns
- notices in utility bills
- television, radio, and newspaper advertisements
- posters and flyers in community areas such as libraries, housing developments, and churches

## Finding the Right Program

Reasons offered for selecting a particular adult education or literacy program were numerous but generally fell into a few basic categories:

❑ **Accessibility.** Literacy delegates looked for programs that best met their needs, relying on the recommendations of friends and others who had success stories. However, they emphasized that accessibility factors were critical. Convenient locations, flexible hours, and programs accessible by public transportation were favored over those programs in more remote locations. Several participants appreciated the opportunity to attend classes in their communities or at their work sites. However, for some students, programs located outside their community or outside the workplace were preferable, providing them with a greater sense of privacy.

*"Poverty doesn't care about your name or skin color."*

Flexible hours were a critical issue for the literacy delegates. Adult education programs serve a diverse population with a variety of needs. Mothers with young children, individuals working nights, and others in unusual situations needed and appreciated day, evening, and weekend classes.

Sometimes there was no choice in deciding which adult education or literacy program to attend. It was the only program available. This was particularly true in rural parts of the country.

❑ **Environment.** First impressions are important. Adult learners want to feel comfortable, accepted, and part of a group. Issues such as ensuring a student's privacy and respect, demonstrated by adult teachers, contributed to the student's commitment to learning. The sense of class unity and a pleasant physical environment in the classroom were also positive factors. Many appreciated participating in a program with their peers.

- **Support Services.** Participants expressed appreciation for programs that assisted with two of their greatest needs—childcare and transportation. On-site day care facilitated attendance for mothers of young children while direct bus or van service eased attendance for others. Counseling services were also recognized as a valuable component of the programs, and those selecting literacy programs mentioned the importance of one-on-one tutoring.

*"I love reading to my grandchildren."*

- **Program Design.** Several Literacy Delegates mentioned issues relating to program quality, course offerings, and credit for life experiences as reasons to select a particular adult education or literacy program. The specific education goals of the program as well as program facilities, such as computer labs, heavily influenced their decisions.

A number of Literacy Delegates drew clear distinctions between adult high school and GED programs. They noted that some employers favored the adult high school diploma over a GED. The Delegates were disappointed that not all states offered adult high school programs.

*"I got my driver's license..."*

Concern was also expressed that some evening programs did not offer the same curriculum or access to resources as day programs. Adult learners felt that publicly supported resources available to youth through schools should also be available to them.

## Challenges Along the Way

These were the most frequently cited obstacles to regular attendance:

- **Childcare.** A critical issue for many Literacy Delegates was the need for better coordination of class schedules and childcare. Many Delegates noted that affordable baby-sitters or day care centers willing to accept infants were particularly difficult to find.

*"I was afraid to travel before...couldn't read the signs."*

- **Transportation.** For those living in rural areas, the distance between home and program sites presented challenges since public transportation was often non-existent. Limited financial resources compounded travel problems since many adults could not afford to own or lease vehicles.

- **Program Availability.** Availability of programs was another concern for Literacy Delegates. Many reported that their areas did not have enough programs. English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) programs frequently had long waiting lists.

- **Limited Financial Resources.** Those with the greatest financial needs said they had trouble paying for child care, transportation, books, and other basics necessary for regular program attendance.

*"Once I decided I wanted to learn, no one could stop me. I had a goal."*

But for some literacy delegates the barriers to enrollment were personal. They lacked self-esteem and confidence. They needed encouragement to overcome their fears. From their experiences in elementary school, they were afraid that they might be ridiculed again in class. Others had to overcome strong objections from their spouses to attend classes. Clearly, without motivation and determination, these adult learners would not have stayed in the programs. Those Literacy Delegates who were strongly motivated found ways to overcome the many obstacles that threatened their enrollment. They actively sought assistance in solving problems. They refused to allow obstacles to deter them from their goals.

## Overcoming Obstacles

When asked what types of initiatives adult education programs should institute to promote attendance, responses of participants were clear and unanimous:

*"I was having migraines from trying to memorize on the job because I couldn't read."*

- affordable child care
- transportation
- convenient location
- flexible scheduling
- trained counselors
- caring staff and teachers

When asked what factors helped adult learners succeed, consensus was also evident:

- personal determination
- understanding family and friends
- peer support group

## Program Structure

The third major topic for discussion focused on program structure issues. Asked about program content, teaching methodologies, and how their adult education experience compared to previous education experiences, literacy delegates' responses were overwhelmingly positive. The participants enjoyed learning subjects that were relevant to their daily lives, using teaching materials designed for adults, and learning in an environment with peers. Specific courses varied depending upon their educational level and the programs they attended. Many spoke of new skills they acquired.

### Program Content: Lessons for Life

*"Tired of faking it... pretending to read when I couldn't."*

According to the literacy delegates, reading was the single most important skill taught in their adult education and literacy programs. Learning basic skills was the focus of many programs, with teaching materials designed to appeal to adults. Some instructors had students read the newspaper for current events while others allowed them to select reading materials.

In addition to language and communication skills, literacy delegates acquired life skills. Learning how to balance a checkbook or how to plan a family budget made math classes more relevant and more enjoyable. Employability skills were also taught. Several participants indicated the personal value of computer training, classes designed to teach clerical and office skills, how to write a resume, prepare for a job interview, and complete an employment application.

*"I now feel I am part of the American dream."*
*—ESL program graduate*

In addition to learning English, ESL literacy delegates mentioned how much they valued learning about American customs and practices. They also recognized the value of their civics classes since these helped prepare them for citizenship.

A major breakthrough for many literacy delegates was learning the value of parenting skills. By learning to read, they gained the skills that enabled them to participate in school activities. They realized their goals of becoming better parents for their children and assuming a greater role in their children's education and development.

### Readiness: A Key Factor in Success

Many of the literacy delegates had had negative experiences while enrolled in elementary or secondary school. In contrast, they had positive comments about their adult education experience. The delegates stressed how important it was that adult education teachers and staff showed understanding, encouraged them, and treated them with respect as

adults. They appreciated how their teachers and tutors helped build their confidence and worked to meet their special needs.

Some expressed frustration about being pushed through the traditional education system without learning how to read or without having their learning difficulties diagnosed. Others spoke angrily of the ridicule they were subjected to as children because of their learning difficulties or because their families were too poor to provide them with appropriate school clothes and supplies. Some believed that their earlier teachers were not very interested in their problems. They also emphasized how they felt accepted by their classmates in adult education programs. No one ridiculed them when they made mistakes in class.

*"...had to get beyond feeling stupid."*

Participants articulated that perhaps the most critical difference between their previous education experience and their adult education experience was that they were ready for learning. Determination, desire and self-discipline enabled them to focus their attention on their classwork. Delegates were no longer afraid to ask questions and were desperate for answers.

## Orientation and Assessment

Although not all literacy delegates received a formal orientation in their programs, many appreciated getting an overview and learning what to expect. Some orientations mapped out very specific study plans, but others provided more information than the the participants could absorb.

*"You are never too old to learn."*

All of the delegates reported that they were tested or assessed prior to placement. These assessments provided the adult learners and their counselors with valuable information, which enabled them to determine their academic strengths and weaknesses and the appropriate levels of instruction. Pre-test anxiety was not uncommon, but the participants recognized the importance of testing. They were relieved when the assessment led to the proper identification of previously undiagnosed learning disabilities.

An orientation program that made adult learners aware of all possible services that might be available to them was cited as an important aid to students. They wanted to know about counseling, tutoring, and job readiness programs at the outset.

## Learning How to Learn

Adult education programs were flexible in meeting their particular education needs, according to the participants. Students were able to succeed with self-paced instruction and special attention to individual problem areas.

*"The key is to discover how you learn."*

According to the literacy delegates, adult education programs successfully assisted those students who had learning disabilities. Delegates welcomed the variety of teaching methods employed by their instructors. For many, learning became fun once their individual learning styles were identified. Some participants with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia and attention deficit disorders, found that they learned best with special multi-media approaches and materials designed to enhance their understanding of concepts. Dyslexia and attention deficit disorders were the most frequently mentioned learning problems.

Resources at the local level varied significantly from one program to another. Some participants attended traditional classroom style programs and others worked in high technology labs. Many students told focus group facilitators that their programs relied on textbooks, blackboards, and basic materials. Others said that they had used computers, cassette tapes, videos, and other media to learn. In all, mixtures of strategies were employed in the learning environment of these participants.

*"When we know that the teacher cares, we care."*

Individual tutoring and self-paced classes made a significant difference according to the adult learners. Lending libraries, computer facilities, and other technology were appreciated. However, the methodology and technology was not as important as the relationship between the teacher and the adult learner. Participants repeatedly spoke of the significance of this bond between teacher and student.

## Persistence and Retention

The fourth and final topic for discussion at the forum was persistence and retention. A major concern in adult education and literacy programs has been that many students leave the programs after a short time which has been found to be an insufficient period for attaining goals. Although student retention does not ensure successful completion for all students, attrition or "dropping out" certainly translates into missed opportunities for learning. The literacy delegates were asked to share insights into what kept them in the programs and what problems were encountered during their enrollment. They also were asked for suggestions on how to motivate students to stay in the programs and, finally, for suggestions as to how adult education programs might be improved.

### Barriers to Success

Most forum participants acknowledged that they had to overcome some problems to remain in the adult education and literacy programs. Not surprisingly, these problems were generally the same ones encountered when they began their adult education studies:

- **Motivational Issues.** At times, self-doubts or lack of self-discipline seemed to threaten the successful completion of adult education programs for the participants. Supportive teachers, staff, and family members helped them overcome these motivational problems. Old routines, spending the evenings watching television or socializing with friends, were difficult to change. Distractions at home and in the classroom also adversely affected their ability to concentrate on their studies. Several women discussed cultural barriers to their continued enrollment. Their family members undervalued their education or found their participation threatening.

- **Transportation.** Access to public transportation, program van service, or carpools was a critical issue for many participants.

*"I cried when the childcare center closed because I knew I would have to quit."*

- **Childcare Needs.** The lack of affordable, dependable childcare was emphasized as an important factor.

- **Scheduling Conflicts.** Juggling work, family, and school obligations was often difficult for the participants, especially for single parents with young children.

- **Financial Burdens.** Financial limitations were cited as significant barriers to remaining focused on adult education programs. Yet, the long-term benefits of remaining in school convinced the adult learners that financial sacrifices were worthwhile.

## Personal Support Systems

Many Literacy Delegates admitted that they had been tempted to withdraw from adult education and literacy programs but they persisted because of the support they received. They recognized the help:

- supportive teachers who called them when they missed classes and encouraged them to continue
- family members who provided child care and moral support
- classmates who offered assistance with difficult assignments and inspiration
- counselors who listened and helped with academic and family problems

Seeing others succeed provided inspiration for the adult learners to work hard and stay in the programs. They too wanted to experience the satisfaction of achieving their education goals. Visions of graduation, getting a better job, being promoted, enriching their parenting skills, and achieving a sense of accomplishment helped get them through difficult times.

Anger also proved to be a powerful motivator. Some delegates admitted they just didn't want to fail again. They wanted to prove they could accomplish their goals and realize their dreams.

## Reasons for Withdrawing

Delegates talked about why their peers had withdrawn from adult education programs:

- family conflicts/loss of child care
- unsupportive teachers
- work schedule conflicts
- loss of income/financial problems
- court order expired
- drug/alcohol problems

## Program Recommendations

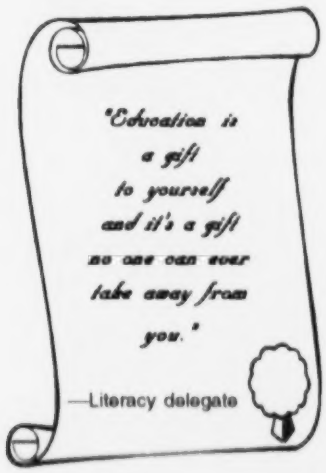
At the close of the fourth session, literacy delegates were asked what advice they would give directors of local adult education programs to help more students. Their answers were clear and precise:

- develop more promotion and outreach to recruit students (use common facilities such as laundromats, supermarkets, churches)
- coordinate with Kindergarten through secondary school programs to ensure that adult students share resources and children take information home to their parents about adult education programs
- obtain additional funding to supplement resources for programs such as computer labs and libraries
- provide additional professional development for teachers to enable them to better understand adult learning methodology and learning disabilities
- recruit additional counselors to help with academic and personal/family problems
- involve former students in recruitment and retention efforts
- increase the number of programs (to alleviate long commutes and waiting lists)
- evaluate adult education programs
- implement an additional adult high school program in addition to a GED program
- establish additional cooperative agreements with other social service agencies to make the transition from one program to another easier for students
- provide information to the media about adult education programs
- utilize student portfolios and other credentials which transfer to other systems
- provide updated technology for adult education programs
- allow new students in ESL classes to enroll as soon as learners leave the program

## Final Thoughts

It is impossible to capture, in these pages, the excitement, energy, and sense of urgency the literacy delegates expressed about their experiences. While we are presently serving more than 4 million adult learners, the need to provide the same for more than 42 million adults who lack the basic skills necessary to secure a place in our economic and social mainstream is essential. The quotes in the document represent some of the delegates' words. The overall messages were clear:

- Adult education is a small investment compared to the enormous changes it can make in an individual's life. As literacy delegates demonstrated, not only does the adult learner benefit, but also society as a whole including the family, the community, and the workplace.
- Adult learners gain positive attitudes and skills through success in adult education programs.
- Successful adult learners become self-sufficient, and less dependent upon social programs.
- Parents who are adult learners become positive role models for their children, creating intergenerational benefits.
- Adult learners become new citizens and engage in the political process.
- Adult learners who are employed become more productive, which benefits the economy.
- As a group, the Literacy Delegates expressed their desire to help other adult learners achieve their goals.



**Appendix I**

## *National Forum on Adult Education and Literacy: Views from Adult Learners* Advisory Committee

**American Council on Education, GED Testing Service**

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**National Institute for Literacy**

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Cindy Towsner, Education Program Specialist

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Mary Lovell, Education Program Specialist

## Focus Group Questions

**Appendix II**

### Session I: Hopes and Expectations

Script: " This session deals with your hopes and expectations for the program. We are interested in knowing some of your feelings about the adult education program in which you enrolled."

1. Why did you go to the adult education program? Did you have any goals? If you did, what were they?
2. If you didn't have any goals before you started, did the program or process help you develop some goals? Could you tell us how?
3. What did you expect would happen if you achieved your goals in the program? Did the program help you reach your goals?
4. If you did have goals, did they change while you were in the program or after you left?
5. How has the program affected you personally, through your family and your friends?
6. What would you tell other people who are interested in the program?

### Session II: Accessibility and Support Services

Script: "In this session, we want to learn more about how you became involved in the program and what types of support helped you to achieve as much as you have."

1. How did you hear about the program?
2. Why did you choose the particular program you did? What did you learn that helped you make the decision to join? How did you learn it?
3. Were there any things that made the program difficult for you to attend?
4. Were there things that the program provided that helped you to attend on a regular basis?
5. Who helped you as your pursued your education goals?
6. What support services were available to you? Which were most important?
7. Were there things that the program provided that helped you to attend on a regular basis?

### Session III: Program Structure

Script: "In this session, we are interested in knowing how well the particular program in which you participated really met your needs."

1. Did what you were taught relate to your everyday life? Was it meaningful? How?
2. What do you see as the major differences between your experiences in adult education and in your previous education experiences? What made this a better experience for you?
3. As you are probably aware, we have a great dropout problem in adult education programs. What specific things about your **program** helped keep you there?
4. When you entered the program, was there an orientation? Was it useful? Why or Why not? Were you tested and given program options? Please describe.
5. Were there special ways of providing instruction that helped you? Did you learn how to learn?

### Session IV: Persistence and Retention

Script: "In this last session, we are interested in knowing the factors that help you remain and succeed in your program."

1. Were there any problems you had to overcome to stay in the program?
2. What helped you stay in the program? What did the program do to assist you in staying engaged?
3. We know pursuing an education as an adult is not an easy task. What things might have caused you to quit?
4. What advice would you give to the director of your local program so he or she can make sure that the program helps others as it has helped you?

**Appendix III**

## Literacy Delegates

Alaska, ***Jennifer Maier***
America Samoa, ***Fenumiai Tanielu Puaatuua***
Arizona, ***Jennie Brown***
Arkansas, ***Markeeta L. McGehee***
California, ***Laura Nonceba Law***
Colorado, ***Andrea Martinez***
Connecticut, ***Ermelinda Flynn***
Delaware, ***Keyla DiSalvo***
Delaware, ***Nancy Shields***
District of Columbia, ***Pameula Michelle Barnett***
Florida, ***Melanie Starks***
Guam, ***Catherine Frances Mendiola Maurer***
Georgia, ***Robert H. Johnson***
Hawaii, ***Keolani Noa*** (unable to attend)
Idaho, ***Augustin Ortiz***
Illinois, ***Steve Kenney***
Indiana, ***Darlene Bremer***
Iowa, ***Archie Willard***
Kansas, ***Elva A. Morales***
Kentucky, ***David E. Nixon***
Laubach Literacy Action, ***Morris Brown (TN)***
Laubach Literacy Action, ***Toni Cordell (NY)***
Literacy Volunteers of America, ***Annette Sessions (CT)***
Louisiana, ***Josephine Selena Harris***
Maine, ***Denise Miller***
Maryland, ***Allen M. Hackett***
Massachusetts, ***James Cromartie***
Michigan, ***Karen Smith***
Missouri, ***Lana K. Mehaffy***
Montana, ***Daniel Paul Guindon***
National Alliance of Urban Literacy Coalitions, ***James Harper (WA)***
Nebraska, ***Charlotte L. Hood***
Nevada, ***Eloisa Phelps***
New Hampshire, ***Wexlie LeBron***
New Mexico, ***Alice G. Jojola***
New York, ***Laurie Bargstedt***
North Carolina, ***James Herbert White***
North Dakota, ***Chelsea Lynn Smith***
Northern Mariana Islands, ***Emerita S. Rangamar Tadeo***
Ohio, ***Elizabeth Saunders***
Ohio, ***Rene Rudd***
Oklahoma, ***Connie Jean Seyler***
Oregon, ***Shannon Marie Hinton***
Oregon, ***Nancy Reader***
Pennsylvania, ***Sue E. Virgili***
Republic of Marshall Islands, ***Bella Ankin***
Rhode Island, ***Maria Nieves***
South Carolina, ***Sandra Taylor***
South Dakota, ***Debra Lee Schmit***
Texas, ***Julie Requenez***
Utah, ***Howard Dixon***
Vermont, ***Allan Laroche***
Virgin Islands, ***Merlise Henry***
Virginia, ***Jessie Grant***
Washington, ***Mary Karinch***
West Virginia, ***Virginia Blacka***
Wisconsin, ***Vivian A. De Ford***
Wyoming, ***Dorothy E. Brand***

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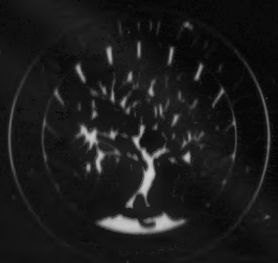

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